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SUBJECT: FEAR OF LOSS OF INTERNATIONAL CREDIBILITY MAY KEEP JEM ON COURSE

REF: KHARTOUM 1859

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. In a November 27 meeting with FieldOff, the Justice and Equality Movement's (JEM) representative in El Fasher admitted that despite the movement's unhappiness with the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), JEM would not carry out the threats its leadership has been lately publicizing against the force, in particular staging attacks against newly-arrived Chinese engineers. The El Fasher JEM representative enumerated conditions necessary to guarantee the movement's participation in eventual peace negotiations and appealed for an audience for JEM leadership with the UN Security Council to compensate for what it considers neglect by the UN/AU Joint Mediation Support Team. The El Fasher rep demurred on questions about the movement's strategy for negotiations in response to rebel coalitions currently under construction in Juba, while another JEM rep in Nyala mentioned the possibility of an alliance in the works between JEM/Khalil Ibrahim and Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abdelwahid. Nevertheless, the El Fasher JEM rep took note of arguments that the international community's patience was not limitless toward those who remained outside the peace process and that it would accordingly be in the movement's best interest to take advantage of this current window of opportunity to come under the UN-AU umbrella. END SUMMARY.

#### EMPTY THREATS ON CHINESE ENGINEERS

¶2. (SBU) The JEM representative to the non-signatory chamber of the Ceasefire Commission in El Fasher opened a November 27 meeting with FieldOff by declaring JEM's displeasure with the current UNAMID deployment and by reiterating comments made to the Sudan Tribune on November 24 by JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim, in which Khalil voiced his opposition to the arrival of a Chinese engineering unit as part of the Heavy Support Package (HSP) of assistance to the AU Mission in the Sudan (AMIS). The JEM rep, having made these points to FieldOff on several previous occasions, accused China of perpetuating the Darfur crisis by providing weapons to both Chad and Sudan, supporting the Government of Sudan (GoS) and "stealing" Sudan's oil. He warned that JEM would not facilitate movement of the Chinese engineers in JEM-controlled Darfur territory and suggested that the international community intervene to prevent the full deployment of these units.

¶3. (SBU) The JEM rep however, was receptive to arguments that UNAMID peacekeepers, regardless of nationality, were mandated by the international community to come to Darfur. He acknowledged that JEM ultimately considered UNAMID forces to be a stabilizing force both for Darfur peace and for the success of eventual peace negotiations. He characterized Khalil's statements to the press as nothing more than JEM's way of sending a message to the Chinese, but warned that the international community should remain vigilant about the Chinese influence in both Sudan and Chad.

JEM WORRIED ABOUT PEACE PROCESS

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¶4. (SBU) Both the JEM reps in El Fasher and Nyala aver that JEM is the rebel movement most prepared for and committed to pursuing peace for Darfur; however, both also attach conditions to the movement's participation. The El Fasher rep stressed the need to establish early on the participants in the negotiations, explaining that if there are too many factions present, particularly those without credible forces on the ground to back them up, then JEM would not attend. The El Fasher rep also expressed concern that certain groups who planned to sit at the negotiating table with the GoS were in fact complicit with the GoS, calling them National Intelligence and Security Service spies.

¶5. (SBU) Despite this tough talk, JEM is acutely aware of and sensitive to the importance attached by the international community to the talks and, by extension, the alienation it will face from the same international community if it opts against active participation in the negotiations. The El Fasher rep reiterated a request for an audience with the UN Security Council to express its views. He further recommended that the AU/UN mediation team take more time coordinating with the movements on the ground in their respective areas of control to avoid "friction" with the groups and to better facilitate consolidation of rebel positions. Regarding rebel alliances, the JEM rep in El Fasher would not comment on the possible emergence of an alliance between JEM and SLA/Abdelwahid ahead of negotiations, but the Nyala rep said such a bond was in the process of forming, facilitated by the creation of a coordination body comprised of both JEM and SLA reps to concentrate on bridging differences between the sides and to work toward a united front. The Nyala rep also disputed the claim that Abdelwahid was losing popular support on the ground to Abdullah Abdelshafie (reftel).

¶6. (SBU) Both reps discussed the November 28 incident in Jebel Marra of the GoS bombing by Antonov aircraft and helicopter gunship of JEM

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locations. Both said the incident was isolated and did not result in injury to Khalil, as initially reported. When asked about possible JEM reprisals, neither rep was committal, stressing that the attack had been arbitrary.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT. While the El Fasher rep enjoys close ties with Khalil Ibrahim (he received a phone call from Khalil directly during the meeting to update him on the situation in Jebel Marra), the Nyala rep, imprisoned by the GoS for the better part of the past year, may be more disconnected from the realities on the ground. This disconnect could call into question the validity of the theory that JEM and SLA/Abdelwahid are uniting to the extent described in Nyala and the assertion that Abdelwahid still enjoys overwhelming IDP support in the camps. In any event, it is clear from these discussions that despite JEM's stated intention to participate in the peace process and to respect UNAMID, the movement still needs some pushing. For the time being, the realization that the international community's patience is short with regard to those who stay outside the peace process -- and the fear of the possible resultant loss of international credibility for failing to comply -- seem to resonate as incentives. END COMMENT.

¶7. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ